United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General urges parties in Yemen to observe cease-fire and settle their dispute peacefully; expresses deep concern at humanitarian situation there.

+ Secretary-General presents 1994 Population Award to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation; says population issues at heart of sustainable development concerns.

+ Fifth Committee approves draft resolutin by which General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to commit up to $18.8 million to finance MINURSO for four months.

+ Commission of Experts in report to Security Council finds evidence of grave violations of humanitarian law in former Yugoslavia; says ethnic cleansing appears part of policy by some parties there.

+ UNAMIR blocked from continuing civilian exchanges at Government controlled church compound in Kigali; RPF reports 30 to 40 children massacred at site; Zambia offers battalion of 800 infantry to UNAMIR.

+ President Soeharto of Indonesia calls for international cooperation to empower women at Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development in Djarkata.

+ WFP launches appeal for $16.7 million to aid 600,00 returnees and displaced persons in Tajikistan.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today urged the parties in Yemen to observe the cease-fire called for by Security Council resolution 924 (1994) and to resume talks aimed at settling their dispute peacefully. He made the appeal following an interim report by his Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, who has been on a fact-finding mission to that country.

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The Secretary-General regretted that the cease-fire was still not effective, despite repeated assurances from both sides and said he was deeply concerned with the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Although the fire in the oil reservoirs near Aden had burned out, there were serious water shortages and health facilities in the city were inadequate, according to a United Nations spokesman. Hospitals urgently needed medical supplies and equipment.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in Geneva today presented the 1994 United Nations Population Award to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation. The Secretary-General said that the Award signalled United Nations concern for people's hope for peaceful world in balance with population, environment and development. A concerted approach to sustainable development was the only way to resolve the interrelated issues of population, economic growth, environmental degradation, pressures on resources, and empowerment of women, he stressed.

Citing progress such as the expanding access to reproductive health-care and lower death death rates among young children, the Secretary-General said more had to be done, as some regions and countries still lagged behind. He noted that when people had a choice they opted for smaller famlies and their children had better access to education. Family planning should be available to all women and men as a basic right.

The Secretary-General said this year's Award winners had brought change to their countries. President Mubarak had incorporated family planning and population issues into his country's five-year development plans. He had also expanded compulsory education among girls. As President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), he had stressed the need for integrating population issues with development concerns. The Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation had expanded the quality of life of families in its country by increasing the efficacy of family-planning services, especially to underserved populations, such as migrant workers and those living in poverty and isolation. It was a shining example of how the private sector could work with Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to improve people's quality of life, the Secretary-General said.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) yesterday approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would authorize the Secretary-General to commit up to $18,812,800 gross to maintain the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) from 1 April to 31 July.

By that text, the General Assembly would also authorize the Secretary-General to maintain MINURSO at a rate not to exceed $3.4 million gross per month for the period 1 August to 30 September. He would be requested to

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ensure that the Mission was administered efficiently and economically. Member States would be urged to ensure prompt and full payment of their assessed contributions for the Mission.

By another draft resolution the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to clarify the positions of special representatives and envoys appointed on a "when actually employed" basis, on special service agreement, on a $1-a-year honororium or with no renumeration. He would be also requested to submit guidelines on those contractual arrangements, including a set of objective criteria for determining the level of such positions and the form of remuneration. Under other provisions of the text, the Secretary-General would be requested to ensure that the number of special envoys, special representatives and other special high-level positions was kept at a minimum. He would also see that their functions and responsibilities were more clearly defined, and that current financial regulations and budgetary procedures were fully complied with.

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The Commission of Experts set up to examine violations of humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia has reported that ethnic cleansing, sexual assault and rape appeared to be part of a policy by some parties there. In an accompanying letter to the Security Council, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said he fully supported the Commission's report which was issued yesterday. Its findings would facilitate the task of the International Tribunal.

Reporting evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, the Commission said it was shocked at the enormous level of victimization and the brutal and ferocious manner in which the crimes had been committed. The type, range and duration of the violations strongly implied command responsibility by commission and omission, it said. Existing separate military structures and mulitple units may have been intended by some parties to allow senior military and political leaders to argue lack of knowledge and inability to control unlawful acts. However, the loose command and control structure also meant unlawful acts could have been disobeyed without individuals risking personal harm, the Commission stated.

The Commission noted that the victims of humanitarian crimes in the former Yugoslavia expected the truth would be established and that the International Tribunal would provide justice. It stressed that the Tribunal must be given the necessary resources and support to meet those expectations.

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The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) efforts to evacuate civilians trapped behind confrontation lines in Kigali today were blocked by militia at the Government controlled Sainte Famille Church compound. The normal escort of gendarmes also failed to show up at the site, where nearly 3,000 people, mainly Tutsis, were taking refuge. A spokesman for the Organization said UNAMIR had been unable to confirm reports by the

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Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) that 30 to 40 children had been massacred at the compound. Yesterday, UNAMIR evacuated 400 people from the church as well as 225 mainly Hutus from the King Faisal Hospital, which is controlled by the RPF.

In a related development, Zambia has offered a battalion of 800 infantry to UNAMIR. However, as with a number of other troop offers, the infantry lacked equipment, the spokesman said. The United States contract for 50 armoured personnel carriers would be finalized today and the United Nations was considering bringing in personnel carriers from Somalia to help bridge the gap before delivery of the United States equipment.

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President Soeharto of Indonesia has called for international cooperation to empower women as equal partners with men, both as citizens and human resources for development. Mr. Soeharto was inaugurating the ministerial segment of the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development in Djarkata yesterday. He said solidarity, partnersip and harmony between men and women should be used to enhance women's role and position both in the family and society. Organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Conference is expected to adopt a declaration and regional plan of action in preparation for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

In a message to the Conference, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that women in many countries had made important gains in education, health, and employment. However, disparities between males and females persisted in crucial areas, including equal representation before the law and in decision-making. Much needed to be done before the objectives of the 1985 Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies of equality, development and peace could be achieved, he said.

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Rafeeuddin Ahmed stressed that political will was now needed to promote development in which women's pivotal role in the economy and society was recognized and given true value.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) yesterday launched an appeal for $16.7 million to aid some 600,00 returnees and displaced persons in Tajikistan. The WFP - the largest food aid organization in the world -- will provide them with nearly 39,000 metric tons of food between now and next March.

Tajikistan whose economy is primarily agricultural is the poorest and least developed of the former Soviet republics. Last year's harvest was poor and severe floods and land-slides caused extensive damage to the country's physical infrastructure, exacerbating the already devastating effects of civil strife. The Government will import 700,000 tonnes of cereals to make up for this year's poor harvest, but credit and food aid will be needed to cover the shortfall.

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